AUSTIN360

HOPSQUAD BREWERY OPENS ITS TAPS IN NORTH AUSTIN

Colorful taproom imagines its beers as a distinctly Austin cast of characters

SPORTS | C1

LONGHORNS' COLLIER SHOWS OFF HER RANGE

With 20 3-pointers this season, the UT forward is proving her versatility

Austin American-Statesman

Friday, January 31, 2020 | statesman.com | @statesman | Facebook.com/statesman | $2

Legislators to hold hearing on TRS lease

By Bob Sechler
bsechler@statesman.com

State lawmakers plan to scrutinize a decision by the Teacher Retirement System of Texas to spend at least $326,000 a month on rent — or $3.9 million annually to start — for a new upscale office in downtown Austin, as sticker shock over the price tag continues to reverberate.

State Rep. Jim Murphy, R-Houston, who chairs the House committee overseeing pensions and financial services, said a hearing on the issue is likely to take place in March, although a precise date hasn't been nailed down yet.

Recently disclosed base rates for the retirement system's lease of office space in the 36-story Indeed Tower under construction on West Sixth Street have stunned many retired teachers and prompted criticism from a number of state lawmakers — including Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick — who contend the pension fund doesn't need lavish digs in the most high-priced area of the city.

"Warren Buffett works out of Omaha, Neb., and I wouldn't call that a garden spot," said state Rep. Drew Springer, R-Muenster, referring to the famed investor and billionaire.

Indeed Tower, named after the internet job-search company that will occupy its top 10 floors, is expected to be among Austin's premier office buildings once it opens next year. The retirement system manages retirement benefits for about 1.6 million current and former teachers and school employees.

The state agency's executive director, Brian Guthrie, said in a written statement Thursday that he's looking

See TRS, A7

UT researchers take on bee decline

Tanya Phillips, owner of Texas Honey Bee Farm, shows one of its hives on Thursday. University of Texas scientists are working on research to reduce the global honey bee population decline. [JAY JANNER/AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

Genetically engineered bacteria protect bees from culprits of colony collapse, new study finds

By Asher Price
aprice@statesman.com

Honey bee populations have sharply declined around the world in recent years, confounding scientists and posing a grave threat to agriculture.

Now, University of Texas researchers might have discovered a way to reverse the trend.

Writing in the new issue of the journal Science, the team wrote that it had genetically engineered strains of bacteria that live in honey bee guts; there, they pump out medicines that protect the bees from Varroa mites and deformed wing virus — two chief culprits of colony collapse, a

See BEES, A12

Sean Patrick Leonard, a graduate student at UT's Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology, looks through a petri plate of bacteria. He is lead author of a study that gives hope for reversing precipitous declines in honey bee populations worldwide. [RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL/AMERICAN-STATESMAN]

Judge finds Texas violating motor voter law

Texans should be able to register to vote when they update driver's license online, court rules

By Chuck Lindell
clindell@statesman.com

Finding Texas in violation of federal law, a U.S. judge gave civil rights lawyers a small win Thursday — fueling hopes of a wider victory in a continuing fight over the state's online voter registration practices.

U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia said the 1993 National Voter Registration Act requires that Texans be able to register to vote at the same time they go online to renew or update a driver's license.

Visitors to the Texas Department of Public Safety website, however, must click through to another website, download a form, print it out, fill it in and mail it to their county registrar — extra steps that violate the federal law's "motor voter" provision designed to encourage voter participation, Garcia said in a written order.

"Congress lifted these burdens to make voter

See VOTING, A6

More inside

Voter registration deadline for primaries draws near, **B1**

BUSINESS | B6

ALLBIRDS LANDS IN AUSTIN

Sustainable shoe brand opens a store on South Congress Avenue

SENATE IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

Vote on witnesses expected for today

By Lisa Mascaro, Eric Tucker and Zeke Miller
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate jurors peppered President Donald Trump's defenders and accusers with final questions at his impeachment trial Thursday ahead of a crucial vote on calling witnesses, the focus shifting from details of the charges to whether it was time to simply acquit and conclude the trial.

The vote on witnesses, expected Friday, could lead to an abrupt end of the trial with the expected acquittal. Or, less likely, it could bring weeks more of argument as Democrats press to hear testimony from former national security adviser John Bolton and others.

See TRIAL, A11

Vol. 149, No. 190
To subscribe: 512-445-4040
statesman.com/service

Business.....B6
Classifieds C8
Comics B9
Obituaries.....B4
Opinion A9
Sports..... C1

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Clouds & sun	Mostly sunny	Warmer
59° / 40°	67° / 44°	74° / 51°

THE GROVE
AUSTIN'S GATHERING PLACE
HOMES - PARKS - OFFICE - RETAIL

THE GROVE
NEW UPSCALE RESIDENCES
MOVE-IN READY OPPORTUNITIES AT 45TH AND MOPAC
Stop by the Grove Store at 1818 W. 35th St. or visit TheGroveATX.com.